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## **Patterson Urges President and Congress to Provide Federal Heating Assistance Funds**

LANSING—The Michigan Senate is calling upon the Federal Government to take strong, swift action on an important matter. Led by the action of Senator Bruce Patterson, Chairman of the Michigan Senate's Committee on Technology and Energy, the Senate has passed Senate Resolution 162. The resolution, sponsored by Patterson, urges increased Federal funding to deal with the predicted increase in the price of natural gas this winter. The anticipated rise in natural gas prices is expected to add \$30 per month or more to the average bill for natural gas service.

"Even though we have managed to keep natural gas prices relatively low in Michigan, demand is greater than current supply. That is forcing prices to rise," said Patterson. "My resolution is intended to help working families meet these rising costs."

On Tuesday, October 14, the Michigan Public Service announced \$6.8 million in grants from the Low-Income and Energy Efficiency Fund to be used for energy efficiency. According to Patterson, "Energy efficiency will play a significant role in addressing our future energy needs. Many of us can remember the 1970s when we were all asked to lower our thermostat. However, an increase of \$30 per month or more in our energy bills will have to come from somewhere. Our most vulnerable populations will still face energy demands this winter and difficult choices on how to pay for them. The Federal Government needs to act now to make sure their needs are met."

According to a Michigan Public Service Commission report, Michigan "ranks among the top 10 states in total natural gas consumption by the commercial, industrial and electric generation sectors." The report also indicates costs in Michigan are well below the U.S. average. Despite colder than normal temperatures and increased demand for natural gas for electrical generation, residential natural gas price increases in Michigan and the cost per thousand cubic foot (Mcf) are well below the United States average when compared from January 2002 to January 2003.